

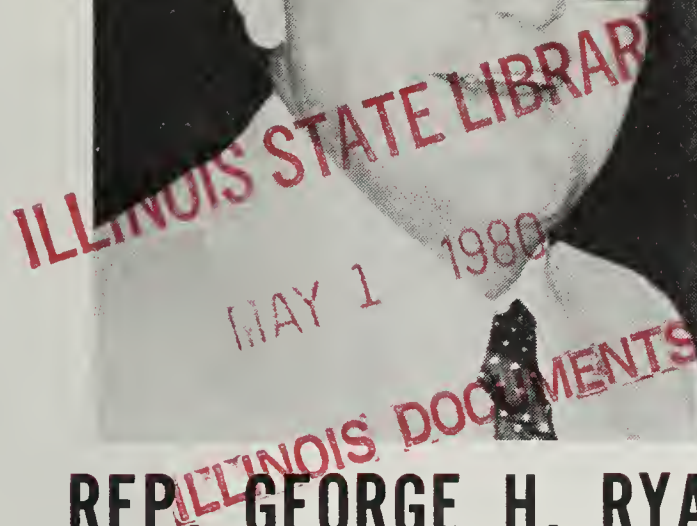
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## REP. GEORGE H. RYAN House Minority Leader

The decisions made by the Illinois Legislature have a major impact on the daily lives of the people of Illinois. The Illinois General Assembly considers matters as broad as amending the U.S. Constitution, and as limited in scope as appropriating funds for a traffic signal. It oversees the collection of taxes and the expenditure of funds for all of state government, a budget of more than \$11.5 billion.

More than one hundred years ago, a former member of the Illinois House of Representatives named Abraham Lincoln called our democratic form of government "a government of the people, by the people and for the people." If today's Illinois General Assembly is to be the kind of government of which Lincoln spoke, active citizen participation is a must. Citizens who can best influence their legislators are those who understand the legislative process. This pamphlet is designed to explain how that process works.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



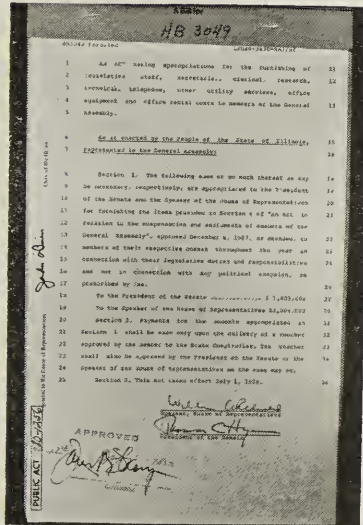
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This is an enrolled copy of a House bill with the Governor's signature. Before this bill became part of Illinois' laws it was studied, discussed, and modified. This pamphlet will describe the process by which an idea becomes a law.

Bills may originate in either the House or Senate. A bill must be approved in exactly the same form by a majority of the members in each house.



The first step in transforming an idea into law is the introduction of a bill. A bill must be introduced by a legislator or a committee before it can be considered by the General Assembly. When a bill is introduced it is filed with the Chief Clerk of the House and is given a number. When the Speaker of the House calls for the introduction of bills, the bill, its title (a very brief explanation of the contents of the bill) its sponsor, and its number are read. This is known as the first reading. All bills must be read aloud by their title on three different days in each house.

Following the first reading, the bill is referred to committee for study.

# How a Bill Becomes a Law

A committee is the House's microscope for closely examining the merits and demerits of a bill. Opponents and proponents of the measure come before the committee to present expert testimony.

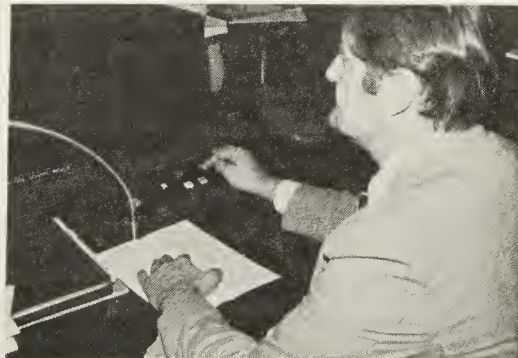


Bills may be amended or changed while in committee. Members of the committee vote to recommend one of three actions be taken by the entire House: "Do Pass," "Do Pass as Amended," or "Do Not Pass" a bill. If the committee recommends that a bill be passed in its original or amended form the bill returns to the House floor.

After a bill passes out of committee it is placed on the House calendar, and is called up for second reading. Upon second reading the bill can be amended. After all amendments have been discussed and voted on, the bill is read for the third time.

Floor debate follows the bill's third reading where representatives voice their opinion of the bill and try to persuade their colleagues to support or defeat the legislation. Once the legislators have had the chance to offer their views, the Speaker of the House calls on the members to vote.

When the Speaker of the House puts a question to a vote he says, "All those in favor vote 'yes,' and those opposed vote 'nay.'" Representatives



have three voting options, "yea," "nay," and "present." For a bill to pass the House it must receive a majority of "yes" votes. In most cases only a constitutional majority, or 89 votes is required, but on some special items an extraordinary majority of three-fifths (107 votes) is required.



If a bill passes the House of Representatives it must be considered by the Senate. In the Senate the bill goes through the same process of study, discussion, and modification. If there is a difference in the bill as passed by the Senate and the House another complex process is set in motion.

A Conference Committee, composed of House and Senate members, is set up to try to iron out differences in the bill. If the Conference Committee reaches an agreement its recommendations are sent to each house where the members vote on the new version of the bill. If they cannot agree, a new Conference Committee is called. If that report is rejected by either house the issue may again go to conference, or it may be abandoned and the bill will die.

## GOVERNOR'S SIGNATURE

Once a bill has passed both houses of the legislature it is ready for the Governor's signature, and to become part of Illinois' law.

The Governor does not have to sign every bill sent to him. If the Governor approves of a bill he may sign it, or he may leave it on his desk for 60 days at which time it will become law.

If the Governor objects to all or part of a bill he may veto it. Three-fifths of the members of each house must vote to override the Governor's veto for the bill to become law.

Thus, a bill becomes a law. The idea of one person is studied, modified, and approved by our elected representatives in the General Assembly, and becomes a part of the body of laws that governs all the people of Illinois.





# History of Cumulative Voting



## MINORITY OPINIONS GAIN REPRESENTATION IN HOUSE UNDER ILLINOIS' UNIQUE ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Illinois' system of electing members of the State's House of Representatives is unique among all the states in the Union. The system guarantees that the will of the majority prevails in the House of Representatives, but at the same time secures the right of the minority to be heard. Under the current system three representatives are elected from each legislative district. Each voter has three votes that he or she may cast in one of three different ways. A voter may: 1) give one vote each to three candidates; 2) give one candidate all three votes; 3) give two candidates 1½ votes each.

The system of cumulative voting for representatives from multi-member districts was developed by members of the 1870 Constitutional Convention.

Political events of the 1850's and the Civil War caused the State to be divided into two large sections. With Republicans winning most of the House and Senate seats from the northern half of the state and the Democrats controlling the southern half. The divisions of partisanship and geography tended to reinforce each other.

Delegates to the 1870 Constitutional Convention developed the cumulative voting system as a response. In urging delegates to the Convention to adopt the plan, Joseph Medill, editor of the Chicago Tribune and chairman of the Committee on Electoral and Representative Reform, said, **"The disenfranchised and downtrodden minorities will everywhere rally to its support . . . . This great measure of reform will carry out pure democratic equality and equal rights for all men in the legislative halls; secure the equal representative of every citizen, the minority with the majority, man for man; allay partisan strife, reform legislative corruption, purify the elective system, inspire good and quiet citizens to attend the polls, enable virtuous citizens to elect pure and able representatives . . . ."**

The results of the 1872 election, the first using the new system gave the minority party in each half of the state substantial gains in representation. After the 1872 election the party alignments in the House reflected quite accurately the relative strength of the two major parties throughout the state.

Resolutions to modify or abolish the cumulative voting system, however, were initiated within 10 years of its adoption and have continued to date.

The most recent effort came in 1970 when a new Constitution was adopted. When the Constitution was submitted to the voters for approval the matter of cumulative voting was submitted separately. Voters expressed a preference for the current system of multi-member districts with cumulative voting.

# LEGISLATIVE GLOSSARY

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY** — The term General Assembly refers to the combined meetings of the House of Representatives and the Senate for one two-year period. The first Illinois General Assembly met in 1819.

According to the Constitution the General Assembly must convene each year on the second Wednesday in January. Traditionally the General Assembly is in continuous session from January through June, and reconvenes in the Fall to reconsider bills vetoed by the Governor and other matters.

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES** — The House of Representatives is one of two bodies that make up the Illinois legislature. The House of Representatives is made up of three members from each of the state's 59 legislative districts. Representatives are elected for two-year terms.

**SENATE** — The Senate is the other body. Voters elect one member from each of the state's 59 legislative districts for four year terms.

**SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE** — The Speaker is the presiding officer of the House of Representatives. The Speaker is nominated and elected by members of the House, and is usually the leader of the party holding the most seats in the House. The Speaker is assisted in his duties as leader of the House and his party by the Majority Leader, three assistant majority leaders and two whips.

**MINORITY LEADER OF THE HOUSE** — The Minority Leader is the leader of numerically strongest party other than the party to which the Speaker belongs. The Minority Leader would probably be Speaker if his party held a majority of seats in the House. The Minority Leader is the chief spokesman and policy maker for the members of the minority party. The Minority Leader is aided by three assistant minority leaders and two whips.

The Speaker, the President of the Senate and the Minority Leaders from each house and their assistants make up the leadership of the General Assembly. This group of Representatives and Senators is most influential in terms of determining what, when, how and by whom legislation is considered in the General Assembly.

**VETO** — A veto is the method by which the Governor can permanently or temporarily prevent the enactment of measures passed by the legislature. If the Governor objects to legislation submitted to him for his signature, he must return the bill to the house in which it originated with a list of his objections. The Governor has three types of veto power. He may veto an entire bill, veto or reduce any item of an appropriations bill, or return the bill to the General Assembly with specific recommendations for change.

If three-fifths of the members in each house vote to override the Governor's veto the bill becomes law without his signature. If the Governor has reduced the dollar amount of an appropriation, a constitutional majority of each house can restore the figure to the amount originally agreed upon by the General Assembly.

If the Governor returns a bill with specific recommendations for change, the bill is considered in the same way as a vetoed bill, but the Governor's suggestions only require the approval of a majority of the members in each house.